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Psst! Psst! The word on the street is that spring has actually come, but keep it quiet. If winter hears about it, she may come back. Since the weather does appear to be breaking, it's time for… You guessed it-Spring Cleaning! So you know what to do; take five minutes to grab three boxes to assist in the purging process and let's get to work!

Stow Away…
First, gather all of your winter gear-like heavy sweaters, boots, coats, blankets, winter sports gear, and any Christmas lights that might be hanging around your house- and clean it, or wipe it down. Next find a home for every item. Try to use what you already have for storage; old suitcases, duffle bags, or large plastic bins with covers. Find out-of-the-way storage spots. Locate a corner in your basement or garage; just make sure it is not in the way.

Throw Away…
Now I know this can be the hardest part of spring cleaning. Yet, it is necessary to take an honest look at what really needs to go. If it's broken, has missing parts, has stains that won't come out, and it's not fit to be donated- toss it. The truth is that once you get rid of junk and rubbish, your mind will feel clearer. Let go of all the excuses that keep you bound to your junk, including feeling guilty because it was gift from your favorite aunt.

Give Away…
Go through all of the closets in your home. Pull out the things you have not worn in a year and place them in the box marked "Donations" Clothes that are too small (or too big) should no longer take up space in drawers and closets. Repeat this process in your children's rooms, and don't forget the toys and books that they have also outgrown. This will make it easier for you and your kiddos to keep bedrooms clean. Before you change your mind, take your donations to your local thrift shop. A few organizations like Disabled American Veterans and the Lupus Foundation have neighborhood pick-ups available in some areas... Another option, www.freecycle.com
provides an online opportunity to advertise your items for free.

Sell on EBay…
For valuable furnishings, antiques, designer clothes, purses, etc, that are no longer in use,

consider selling them and pocketing the cash. Besides www.ebay.com , another favorite is www.craigslist.com
. EBay charges a small percent of the purchase price, but Craigslist offers free services and listings by location, making it easier to sell/buy and arrange local pick-up for large items. I have used both sites (buying and selling coats, shoes, toys, and appliances), and highly recommend them. If you are not sure if your item will sell, first start by visiting the sites and check out the current inventory and prices for similar things.

There is a time, place, and a season for everything and spring is the perfect season to celebrate creation's renewal process. Take the time to get your place in order and make it more conducive to the productive life that I know you (and I) are striving to have. In honor of spring, make a commitment to a fresh start by reducing or eliminating clutter in your surroundings. Enjoy!

Marcia Humphrey is an interior decorator and home stager who specializes in achieving high style at a low cost. A native of Michigan, she and her husband, Lonnie, have three children.